Study on the Commercial Strategies from Changes in Retail Business District in Japan

Based on the Cases of Establishment for Formats of Retail Business in Corresponding with Small-Scaled Business Districts

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to analyze a topic of small-scaled retail business district in Japan with similar industrial structure with Korea and to review the areas for implications in the development of distribution and, particularly, retail business in Korea. This paper analyzes strategic behaviors developed by retail business in Japan in circumstances where business district has been reduced from decrease in the size and changes in the market. Chapter 2 identifies factors for regulating the scale of business district including purchasing behavior of consumers, economic situations, strategic behaviors in retail business, and legal regulations from administration and analyzes current status in reduced business district. Chapter 3 focuses on relevant factors for reducing the scale of business district specifically verifying environment including societies and areas as a background of strategic behaviors in retail business and interaction with reduced business district. Chapter 4 identifies current status of cases for establishing format in corresponding with small-scaled business district and considers issues in the phenomenon of reduced business district as actual conditions of strategic behaviors in retail business are regarded as the most direct cause for reducing the business district. Hereupon, this paper finds characteristics of distribution in Japan proceeded after bubble economy from establishment of strategic format in retail business was collapsed in the era represented by reduced district business and reviews actual conditions and contents of them.

Keywords: Retail business, reduction in business district, small-scaled business district, changes in consumer behaviors, strategic behaviors in retail business.

1. INTRODUCTION

There has been a long period of recession in consumption and retail business due to long-term depression after bubble economy was collapsed in the 1990s (Mitsuki kazuki, 2011). Reduced business district is one of the phenomena shown during this period1. This paper aims to analyze strategies in retail business in corresponding with reduced business district. This is because a phenomenon of reduced business district specifically represents characteristics of distribution in Japan after the 2000s when deflation started after bubble economy was collapsed. Of course, it is not feasible to practically measure the scale of reduction as reduced business district is invisible. In addition, there are many individual opposite cases as well. However, the direction is classified into the following three categories.

First of all, according to circumstances of consumers, their disposable income decreased that they started not purchasing expensive items. In other words, they started saving everything including amount, time, and scale, and this is reducing the scale and range of business district (Jaerim Jung & Sang-Wook Kim, 2015).

Secondly, according to circumstances in retail business, sizes of stores have been increased due to long-term recession after bubble economy was collapsed causing the number of stores to excessively increase compared to the number of consumers or the amount of disposable income. Reduced sales in each store have created new circumstances in competition. In other words, standard procedures applied in previous circumstances or establishment of business became ineffective. In order to react with these circumstances with new business and strategic location, retail business has started utilizing effective competing means causing a phenomenon those businesses were mixed targeting various business districts in the small area.

Third, it is related to changes in administration. After bubble economy was collapsed, there has been an issue of deteriorated performance in department stores or large super-market as well as decline in shopping districts. In these cases, administration has been used as a means of adjustment as well as for problem-solving in commerce and consumptions with legal systems related with different issues such as regeneration of the city and social expenses in the city. This was the city law 3 revised in Japan dealing with policies for reduction of city and road according to regulations of large-scaled commercial facilities from advancing to suburb areas. Therefore, suburbanization is regulated on the function of commerce and city.

Due to changes in purchasing behaviors of consumers tighten belts, the number of retail business has been excessively increased completing with each other in a small area for a limited and also small number of consumers. Therefore, administration has created customer legal system. Hereupon, competition among retail business has been fierce in a small commercial district due to reduction of business district.

Therefore, this study aims to find characteristics of distribution in Japan proceeded after bubble economy in establishment of strategic format in retail business was collapsed in the era of reduced commercial district and to review actual circumstances and contents of them.

2. CURRENT STATUS OF CHANGES IN BUSINESS DISTRICTS IN JAPAN

2.1. Current Status Of Reduced Business District in Japan

2.1.1. Changes in Purchasing Behaviors of Consumers

After bubble economy was collapsed, there have been changes in purchasing behaviors of consumers in long-term recession. Characteristics of changes during the recession indicate that expenditures were

decreased due to economic causes including poor performance of companies, employment instability, and reduction of salary. However, expenditures on shopping have been continuously decreased during the period of deflation when product prices had frequently been decreased. In addition, consumers tend to wait for prices of products to decrease and to avoid purchasing behaviors as they do not excessively or unnecessarily shop.

With an increased defensive consuming consciousness, consumers refrain from purchasing products from shops and start purchasing behaviors only for the required amount of convenience products without wasting their resources. In other words, they save not only resources in the perspective of amount but also time and movement. Hereupon, consumers tend not to prioritize shopping in their lives and to avoid shopping behaviors. Therefore, they only Purchase products to satisfy their needs in retail business.

2.1.2. Strategies in Retail Business District

In order to correspond with changes in purchasing behaviors of consumers, retail business converts their strategic behaviors. They not only reinforce low-price sales but also advance and start selling products around consumers to react with consumers who tend to avoid purchasing products from the store. Grocery market in the risk of closing their business due to deteriorated performance in sales of products such as clothes became magnet store or neighborhood shopping center (hereinafter referred to as NCS) where food groceries or small stores are located at. In addition, small-sized food groceries were developed in residential areas, and department stores that were developed in the residential started opening their stores for food sections on their basement floors. Hereupon, business with shopping goods started advancing to the areas where convenient items were mostly sold. Therefore, various businesses are mixed in regard of the range of business district.

Business types of selling shopping goods near consumers inevitably seek for reinforcing the composition of products for increasing frequency of the visit. As for clothes, casual wear or children goods are focused. In the home appliances, small-sized depletable products are reinforced. In the comprehensive business, food is specifically focused. Convenient stores also reinforce their business strategies with regular products that consumers frequently purchase.

Hereupon, businesses that might have been seemingly distributed in shopping areas of convenient items are mixed without order, and all the business types tend to take a strategic behavior in the market for selling products to a limited number of consumers in the small areas near them. Business district is reduced as various retail businesses correspond with the needs of consumers to purchase items near them.

2.1.3. Revision of Three Urban Development Acts (Small Business Administration, 2003)

Three Urban Development Acts enacted in 1998 includes city promotion law, large-scaled retail store location law, and revised urban development law. However, two laws except for city promotion law pursued to support large-scaled stores to advance to suburbs in this system that large-scaled stores continued increasing as shown in Figure 25.1. During this period, it was confirmed that commerce in the city has been deteriorated. Therefore, three Urban Development Acts were significantly revised in 2006 reinforcing the regulation of them from advancing to suburbs and deriving them to the city. However, policy ideology is to regulate disorderly developed stores in suburb areas and to reduce social expenses. However, it also includes

promoting conversion of purchasing behaviors of consumers and commercial strategies in retail business. Therefore, it aims to provide merchants a compact business district to improve previously deteriorated business performance. Therefore, regulations of large-scale stores from advancing to suburb areas from three of the revised urban development acts reduced the business district.
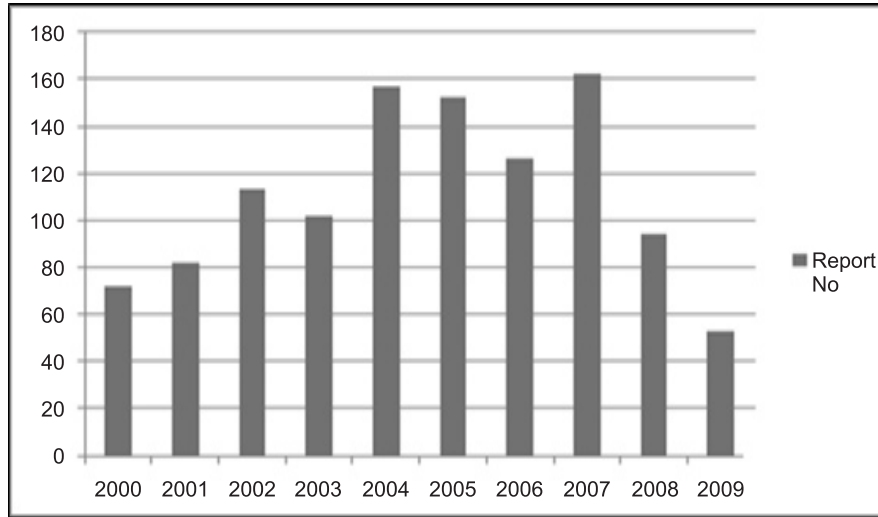
Figure 25.1: Trend of the number of report for opening for large-scale stores

Appendix: The number of report for stores with area of more than 7,000 m^2
Source: Store Japan Company (trend in each year), report statistical of store location act, prepared in "the number of report for opening of stores according to the scale"

3. INFLUENCE OF REDUCTION IN BUSINESS DISTRICTS IN SOCIETY AND THE CITY

As for factors in reducing the business district, there are economic conditions, purchasing behaviors of consumers, strategic behaviors in corresponding with them, and legal regulations. This chapter is to review the influence of reduced business district on the environment in society and the city as a background of strategic behaviors in retail business in dealing with overall circumstances.

3.1. Promotion of Cluster-society

There is a cluster society as a model to pursue from mature society for reduction of population, expenditure, and negative growth. This is a social model re-established when functions are diffused from Tokyo as a previous core region.

There is a high possibility for expenditures and economic transactions to be reduced in society in Japan in the future. Economic activities will be reduced or deteriorated in the areas beyond the city. Hereupon, each of the clusters will become an important unit of domestic economy (Yamaoka suguru, 2009). When applying them to business district, commercial district has been established in a wide range of areas since hubs in large cities had led the sales of products, trend, and fashion. However, if it becomes not difficult to order products and make a payment in rural areas by collecting information from Internet, it becomes feasible for functions of stores previously located in a wide range of commercial areas to be diffused into

the stores in suburb areas (Yamaoka suguru, 2009). Therefore, commercial functions are diffused, and cluster of small-scaled business districts are formed in the entire nation.

As mentioned above, autonomous establishment of clusters in the economy of area and small-scaled business district will promote the cluster-formation in society as well as contribute to the society in Japan that is expected to have characteristics including the decrease of expenditures, aging society, and population.

3.2. Formation of Compact City

City is formed as a unit for performing as economy in each of the areas that constitute the cluster-oriented society. Each of the cities is required to perform an efficient role in each area for an independent existence. In order to do so, compact city formation seems to be valid.

Rapid increase in the price of real estate has been maintained as a general trend in Japan. As a result, residential areas were expanded into suburb areas, and retail business actively advanced to suburb areas either by sole position or moving to shopping centers to pursue low-cost management. Hereupon, city has been developed by expanding the scope into outskirts in disorder. Social capital in supporting them is made with tax collected by local communities. Expenses for the life-line supplements including road or water pipe have been supported by resident tax and corporate tax. However, local communities cannot afford them in case of the decrease in tax collection from aging of residents or deteriorated performance of companies. Furthermore, there is no possibility for these social expenses to decrease even though aging population increases, and collected tax amount decreases in the future. Hereupon, compact city formation is suggested to concentrate the employments and lives in the hub of cities to reduce social expenses when functions of cities were diffused to suburb areas.

This concept was emerged in western countries and suggested as a particular model for urban regeneration that was pursued by three urban development acts. This is mostly proceeded by the efficiency of energy and transportation system, and the common assignments are to correspond with aging society and decrease in collected tax.

The foundation for pursuing the ideology for efficient urban management includes not only the promotion of commerce but also the establishment of one-stop function as roads of hub in the city and overall solution (Hideo Harada, 2009). In other words, there is a need to establish government office, hospital, school, and commercial facility in the hub of city for convenient access and to improve the one-stop solution. Promotion of commerce in the hub of city is also of an important factor.

However, there is a concern on increase of inflation including the price of land, lease, and personnel expenses in the hub of city instead of reduction of joint investment for saving social expenses (Tatsumi Watanabe, 2007). However, commerce focusing on the one-stop function from the hub of city is formed according to small-sized business district, and this is expected to be an element for realizing compact city.

3.3. Influence of Reduction in Business District

Conclusion is made as follows for the influence of reduced business district on society and the city. 1. Clusters of small-sized business district are formed in cluster-oriented society in reference of model in Japanese society promoting the formation of clusters in society. 2. Autonomy of each of the clusters is

assumed with formation of compact city and interaction with them, and city-oriented commerce as a one-stop solution is of an important element on both of them. 3. Reduced business district has an effect of promoting cluster-oriented society in need of small-sized business districts and also the cities regenerated by the formation of compact city.

4. STRATEGIES OF RETAIL BUSINESS IN CORRESPONDING WITH REDUCTION IN BUSINESS DISTRICTS

After three urban development acts were enacted in 1998, the number of stores advancing to the suburb areas was increased, while commerce in the hub was deteriorated. Therefore, these three laws were significantly revised in 2006 starting to reinforce regulations on advancement to the suburb areas and derive the openings of stores in the city. This policy ideology is to regulate the development for excessive diffusion of stores in suburb areas. However, as pointed out earlier, three urban development laws are much more than them. In other words, they pursue the ideology for promoting the conversion of strategies and restoring the environment in cities and areas against poor performance on sales in retail business as consumers started shopping only in the areas near them.

Retail business was required to proceed strategies for opening of the stores according to revision in three urban development laws. Specific phenomena are as follows (Ibid. p. 254).

1. Conversion of business type in the hub of city is emphasized. As for stores previously located in an outstanding circumstance in the hub of city, the number of cases where food groceries in a risk of closing the stores were converted to NSC or one-stop super-market has been increasing.

2. Small-scaled stores are actively developed. Small-scaled businesses including food groceries or small-sized home-shopping centers have been actively developed.

3. Small-or-med sized discount stores smaller than the standard areas (10 thousand m^2 of floor area or 7000 m^2 of floor area in the store) with the parking lot instead of large-sized commercial facilities are increasing in disorder in the suburb areas, especially; in the roadside.

4.1. Cases of Establishment for Reacting Format of Small-sized Business District

In case of increasing the number of chain stores, common sense dictates that increasing the stores one by one in a wide range of business district is better in high population as to how to distribute stores. However, there are opposite opinions. The insist that population residing in business district is not related to the number of visitors. It is important to increase the frequency of the visit among consumers to form the strong chain and to reduce the number of stores in each business district while pursuing the roller-type openings in the same area. In other words, it is to increase the number of stores in the small scale (Atsutoshi Kazu, 2007).

Achieving the small-scaled stores by learning the winning patterns from the increased number of chain stores, in other words; increasing the frequency of the visit among consumers in each store, and completing the small-scaled stores are the basis for creating competitive stores in Japan where consumption is decreasing. There has been a strong movement in establishing small-scaled formats by using the trend of the times when business district was reduced due to causes including decrease in purchasing behaviors (Oh Jae-Sin & Jeong Dae-Yul, 2015) of consumers or results of administrative policies.

4.1.1. Openings of Business for Sales of Shopping Goods Nearby

Decrease in consumption directly influences on the purchase of excessive or unnecessary shopping goods including clothes or home appliances. In addition, consumers refrain from shopping behaviors not to purchase unnecessary items. Business for sales of shopping goods has been reinforcing the trend of openings of stores in small-sized power centers where neighborhood-type convenient stores near the hub of city open to correspond with aforementioned situations.

Clothes in the low price from business on sales of shopping goods near residential areas are equipped with the image of items for small-sized sales but with diverse types (Kensuke Kojima, 2006). Expanding the business field of consumable products has been emphasized in the field of home appliances. On the other hand, food groceries have been actively converted into super center business equipped with discount stores for non-food items in the field of food in order to realize one-stop solution when consumers purchase shopping goods in neighborhood. Hereupon, sales of shopping goods have been actively performed in the areas where convenient items were sold making various business types mixed with each other but reducing the business district.

However, there have been issues as to whether stores concentrated in the small area were an appropriate form of shopping, problems of parking or accessibility in the hub of city from the past, whether high price of land was still applied on the prices of items, and whether the hub of city was to be promoted.

4.1.2. Conversion of Business Type Among Stores in a Risk of Closing their Business

After bubble economy was collapsed, performance on the overall retail business has been outstandingly deteriorated. In the beginning, recession in consumption started from the poor performance of sales among high-priced products and decrease in sales in department stores has been lasting making deflation a serious issue. Therefore, discount stores called as a category-killer for selling high quality products in low price with enriched fields of business started dominating the stores on sales of shopping goods and deteriorating their business.

1. **Performance of using general super-market after the closing:** Cases where general super-markets in slump closed their business have been increasing in the hub of provincial city. According to the investigation of each location in commercial statistics, there has been an outstanding trend of reduction in the number of stores in commercial concentrated areas as well as regions near the station. Maikaru became bankrupt in 2001, and Say-U was sold in 2002. Daiei accepted the support from industrial restoring organization in 2004. Reflecting such cases in the early 2000s, stores of Ito Youkado and Jasco that seemed to be in good conditions closed. The number of closed general super-market has been increasing. In addition, there have also been increasing cases where food groceries were converted into NSC in small-sized business district. Similar cases represent that Maxvalu replaced the areas where Daiei or Saty were located at for their businesses in an accelerated development.

   For conversion into NSC to be successful after general super-market was closed, core food groceries shall be accurately ranked. Dominating from the competition with convenient stores for sales is of the priority, and fierce battle is developed among those that could not survive in the competition with existing general super-market.

2. **Usage of closed area of department stores:** There have been increasing cases that department stores in the risk of closing in the hub of provincial cities or hubs of the cities. Comparing how there has been an outstanding phenomenon of closed department stores in the rural areas in the early 2000s, performance became deteriorated in peak after 2004 while influencing on department stores in the city.

   Existing department stores were equipped with cosmetics and foods as well as luxury clothes and accessories targeting large business district. However, purchasing power and demand have been rapidly lowered making it not feasible for department store business to survive even though population was maintained.

   According to the investigation of Nikkei distribution newspaper, use of 74 department stores closed for 10 years from 2000 to 2009 has been around 70 percentage. 10 stores were re-opened in the form of department store, and 7 of them were converted into home appliance mass supermart. There were 10 stores that were used for purpose other than commercial facilities including those re-started as complex commercial facility (The Nikkei distribution newspaper, 2010).

4.1.3. Development of Small-sized Stores

According to the mixed or converted business types in terms of establishment for corresponding formats among small-scaled business districts, following sections will consider changes in the size of stores to be smaller than average size of relevant business opening around the consumers. According to the three revised urban development acts, mid-sized stores in the total site area of less than 10 thousand m^2 and also store area of less than 7000 m^2 were regarded to be exempted. However, this place is also developing the small-scaled stores in the size of less than 1500 m^2 in the hub of city.

1. **Development of small-scaled food supermarket:** After bubble economy was collapsed, price of land plummeted due to long-term recession while population moved to the hub of city. However, development of residential area after the period of high-growth has been mostly made in suburb areas. Therefore, there has been an insufficient amount of convenient product business in the hub of large cities. Due to an increasing number of consumers using the stores near them from daily shopping goods, small-sized business district is formed near the hub of city as a previously established large-scaled business district.

   Hereupon, small-sized stores were established alongside the roads focusing on the low-priced necessities in order to correspond with saving habit of consumers for wanting to purchase small amount of items whenever they need them in the city. "My Basket," "Maxvalu Express," and "Mary Espucci" from Ion Group have been actively developed.

2. **Development of small-scaled home centers:** Home center dealing with DIY in the special stores in the field of residence is classified into city-type and suburb-type. The latter one is of a general form that has been opening large-scaled stores in suburb areas for selling daily supplies including items for residence, horticulture, home appliances, kitchen supplies, bathrooms, and storage. The former one has been developing the field of business mostly in cities focusing miscellaneous goods as Docu-Hands or Loft did.

Suburb-type home center is focusing on consumer durables with low frequency of purchase and is located in the outskirts in the large-scale. City-type home center is focusing on miscellaneous goods. However, they represent low frequency of purchase when compared to beauty supplies or bathroom items provided by Drug Store. Therefore, they are inappropriate for small-scaled business district. However, there has been an attempt from home center to develop small-scaled stores such as food groceries.

Developing the stores in areas with low population, Conan has been establishing the small-sized home-center named Home Stock. Home Stock has been targeting the business district with population of 8 to 15 thousand people. Since Conan was opened in 2000, 54 stores out of 218 are small-scaled Home Stocks. Pursuing the low price and the number of items compressed in the ratio of 22 thousand scale, home center has been established in small-scaled business district.

On the other hand, as cases for small home centers established in the city areas, Compact Loft has been establishing small-scaled buildings near the station. However, Seven Home Center has recently been in a limelight. This is featured with areas including the business in city-type home center as well as residence, horticulture, and pet supplies from suburb-type home center. Therefore, these are supplied to residents in the city according to daily demand

3. **Development of small-scaled discount stores:** Discount stores such as Aoyama, Uniqlo, and Nitori are currently increasing the number of small-sized stores compared to previous stores. As for the location along the road, med-sized stores have been established near the areas to be regulated. However, openings in NSC or buildings near the station are small-sized stores. Small-sized stores are flexible for opening and closing and also rapidly collect invested amount.

Aoyama Store has been focusing on openings in capital areas targeting to open 10 small-sized stores in Tokyo, about 80 stores in Akita, Aomori, and Iwate, and increase the number of stores by 50% in areas up to 250 stores for the next 10 years (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2010).

First retailing developed by Uniqlo has been establishing the 'Block Uniqlo' in the franchise methods with small-scaled stores in the size of less than 100 m^2 and also of one-eighth of standard stores inside of subway stations and airport. Products have been focused with flagship or items under campaign, and sales are expected to be as high as the ones of stores established along the road in suburb areas (The Nikkei distribution newspaper, 2010).

3.1.4. *Assignments of Establishment of Corresponding Format of Small-scaled Business Districts*

Cases of establishment for corresponding format of small-scaled business district have been explained above. Such behaviors in retail business were related to corresponding with saving purchasing behaviors of consumers and to proceed major strategies for swiftly reacting with sales by opening stores near consumers from the openings in concentrated commercial districts in neighborhood or development of small-scaled stores. However, geographical strategy with priority in mobilization and expenses from openings of these stores are only a part of achievement obtained from establishment of corresponding format of small-scaled business district. What needs to be emphasized for establishment of format corresponding with small-scaled stores is how to make a break through low threshold in commercial districts and increase frequency of the visit by attracting consumers in the relevant areas. This is of a common factor in the field

of sales for shopping goods as well as in the area of convenient products. Competition is currently fierce for achieving the original goals.

In order to increase the frequency of visit and attraction among consumers, it is required to sincerely provide service. After bubble economy with characteristics of saving-type was collapsed, there are cases including the food super-market delivering items to houses within a couple of hours by placing an order online in reference for efficiently corresponding with demand among consumers (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2010). The issue is how affordable it is to deliver items and whether it is possible to deliver them for free. In order to do so, openings for creating efficient delivery areas that are closely related with delivery hours are the conditions for including delivery service as a part of business. In this case, they are able to enjoy advantages for making it feasible to correspond with saving-type consuming behaviors by providing items in low price in retail business and make consumers improve their preference beyond the merit for how stores are located near them.

5. CONCLUSION

Japanese society has confronted negative growth in terms of economy, aging, and decrease in population while experiencing recession. In addition, economic conditions such as long-term recession or deflation have lead consumer market and settled low-price trend. Characteristic trend in distributions including price, resistance of purchase, famous products, and new business type might seem to be normally repetitive procedures in spite of rapid changes. However, it seems that there has already been a turning point of distribution as of now when nearly a half century has passed since modern distribution was established. After bubble economy was collapsed, economy in Japan has been clearly exposed to characteristics of recession while emerging with conversion of behaviors in distributions in corresponding with them.

Especially, there are distinct characteristics of retail business at the bottom layer. One of the converted strategic behaviors is that small-scaled stores were established as a corresponding strategy among retail businesses to react with changes in purchasing behaviors of consumers. This includes new approaching strategies and re-establishment of business. As reviewed in this study, reduced business district has been proceeded in background of conversion in society and economy. Therefore, strategies about position and business of retailers have been converted as well. Hereupon, business district will be further reduced if retail business freely switches in behaviors, and administration relies on regulations of openings in revised three urban development acts.

Various business types are mixed together in reduced commercial district, and roads with one-stop shopping might not be realized. In order to cope with stagnated society, economy with negative growth, and deteriorated hub of the city, there is a need to provide commercial facilities corresponding with small-scaled stores that can contribute realistic lifestyle regulated in terms of aging and decrease in population and income. In order to do so, local administration shall be emphasized in realistic methods for utilizing site acquired from owners.

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